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ABSTRACT

Significant differences in self-concept, levels of experience, readiness to learn, and student motivation make the task of teaching adults quite different from that of teaching children. More than any other academic area, speech communication is uniquely suited and able to incorporate andragogical theory into its teaching methodologies, especially in the community college. Compared to their four-year college counterparts, community colleges enroll more older, part-time, female, married, minority, and evening students. The speech communication course can be designed to meet all three adult learner motivations: goal orientation, activity orientation, and learning orientation. For the adult with a "learning orientation," there is a rich heritage in speech communication dating back to Aristotle and continuing with the highly sophisticated and scholarly research found in the pages of contemporary communication theory textbooks. For the "activity oriented" student, the course may be the only class where students are encouraged to get to know each other better. And for the "goal orientation" student, the speech course can provide highly relevant learning opportunities. (HOD)

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Andragogy in Community College Communication Courses

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Anyone, with even a passing interest in the research and literature of Adult and Continuing Education, will encounter the word "andragogy." The term was popularized by one of adult education's gurus--Malcolm Knowles--who wrote:

> Let me point out that "pedagogy" comes from the same stem as "pediatrics"--the Greek word "paid," meaning child (plus "agogus," meaning leader of). So, literally, pedagogy means the art and science of teaching children. So to speak of "the pedagogy of adult education" is a contradiction in terms. ... The new theory is going under the label of "andragogy" derived from the stem of the Greek word "aner," meaning man (as distinguished from boy).

Inherent in this new word is a set of assumptions about adult learners. The literature of adult education continually emphasizes the ways in which adult learners differ from children. Significant differences in self-concept, levels of experience, readiness to learn, and student motivation make the task of teaching adults quite different from that of teaching children. Time does not permit a detailed discussion of these differences, particularly since the objective of this program is the discussion of adult education and speech communication, rather than adult education for its own sake. In addition, this particular presentation is intended to present a discussion of "Andragogy in Community College Communication Courses" which

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limits the topic even further. Therefore, let me move straight to the main point--I believe that more than any other academic area, speech communication is uniquely suited and able to incorporate andragogical theory into its teaching methodologies.

Before examining this thesis more specifically, a brief look at the community college and its population of adult learners is in order. Compared to their four-year college counterparts, community colleges enroll more older, part-time, female, married, minority, and evening students. An AACJC "Fact Sheet on Two-Year Colleges" (1970) summarized community college student characteristics:

> Women make up 52 percent of the total headcount enrollment and 53 percent of the part-time headcount enrollment in community and junior colleges. Minority student enrollment is 26.7 percent of the full-time enrollment at two-year colleges, and 19.8 percent of part-time enrollment....Data from the Bureau of the Census show that in 1976, 62 percent of the students in two-year colleges were over age 21.

In contrast, a 1979 national survey of characteristics and attitudes of first-year college students conducted by the American Council on Education (1980) reported that only 2.2 percent of four-year college freshmen are over 21, and approximately 85 percent are white.

A more specific example of the change in and characteristics of community college students can be illustrated by a Prince George's Community College research report which documented the "Changes in Student Profile, 1975-79."

From 1975 to 1979, the number of students under 21 years of age grew by 467; the number of students over 21 grew by 1580. From 1975 to 1979, the number of white students decreased by 84 while the number of black students increased by 1830. In addition, approximately half of the college's student population was taking courses at night rather than during the more traditional daytime schedule. In short, the population of the community college became a population of working adult students. The Prince George's Community College Master Plan (1980) summarized the dilemma resulting from this change in demographics:

> (the college)...is serving more and more part-time non-traditional students within a framework designed to provide operating funds and facilities for traditional full-time students.

It is my belief that this dilemma can be resolved by understanding and accepting "andragogy" as the appropriate instructional philosophy and methodology.

As I have already indicated, andragogy is becoming a vast discipline with numerous theories and methodological proponents. For the purpose of illustrating the applicability of these theories, I would like to highlight the research in only one area of adult education, that in adult student motivation. Just as all roads lead to Rome, most continuing education motivational research finds its source in Cyril Houle's text, <u>The Inquiring Mind</u> (1961) which, on the basis of 22 in-depth interviews with adult

learners, identified three adult learner orientations. Houle's typology has since been further developed and empirically verified by researchers such as Boshier (1971, 1976), Burgess (1971), Grabowski (1972), and Morstain and Smart (1974).

Cyril Houle wanted to know why adults seek education. His answer was that they seek education for one or more of three basic reasons or orientations.

1. Goal Orientation. Education is used to fulfill a predetermined goal. When a need or interest arises, learners satisfy it by taking a course, reading a book, or joining a relevant group. For example, such a person might take a speech course because it is required or because an employer insists upon it.

2. Activity Orientation. Learners participate primarily for social reasons. Their motives often have no connection to course content; they are "course-takers and group joiners" (Houle, p. 23). Such learners take courses for the purpose of meeting people and developing relationships.

3. Learning Orientation. Learners participate for the sake of knowledge; they are continuous, lifelong learners. They read more, join groups for educational reasons, and pursue activities which promote intellectual and personal growth.

The literature of adult education suggests that courses should be designed to meet all three adult learner motivations. The speech communication course can make this adaptation in the most obvious and eloquent of ways.

For the adult with a "learning orientation" there is a rich heritage in speech communication dating back to Aristotle and continuing with the highly sophisticated and scholarly research found in the pages of contemporary communication theory textbooks. The student who enjoys learning for learning's sake can find a variety of outlets for his or her interests. Learning "how" or "why" a communication is successful is inherently satisfying for such learners. This is not to imply that an adult student with a learning orientation cannot find true happiness in a philosophy course or an economics seminar. What is unique about speech communication courses is that the other two orientations can also be accommodated.

For the"activity oriented" student, the speech communication course may be the only class where students are encouraged (if not required) to get to know each other better. Be it an interpersonal exercise or listening to student speeches, students have the opportunity to socialize and interact with other students. In our classes at the community college, we highly encourage our instructors to create sub-groups within all classes. Within these groups, students can study together, practice their

speeches in front of each other, as well as prepare group projects together. Our experience has been that many groups that were formed, somewhat arbitrarily, in a speech class have continued to meet on a social basis outside of class. Without dormatories, there are few opportunities for community college students with an activity orientation to meet other students for the purpose of socializing. Speech communication courses and co-curricular forensics and theatre programs can provide the needed social opportunities for such students.

The final but most prevalent orientation for community college students is the "goal orientation." Although such students take a speech course only because it is a degree or employment requirement, the speech communication course can provide highly relevant learning opportunities. Students in our basic course for technical and career majors, for example, must choose speech and discussion topics related to their major areas of study. Discussion topics can range from "The Advantages of the Semi-Conductor Device" by a group of Electronic Technology majors to "How to Control Periodontal Disease" by Dental Assistant majors. Detailed contracts can be developed so that the individual goals of different adults are met. In an Interviewing course or unit, for example, a Law Enforcement major's project might center on interrogation techniques while a marketing major's project could focus on the sales interview.

Speech communication courses have the unique ability to adapt to all three basic orientations within a single course. The results of such adaptation can be gratifying. At Prince George's Community College, the future of the required speech course is virtually assured because the course is designed to meet adult students' needs. When surveyed, students of all types consistently report that their speech class was one of the most enjoyable and valuable in their college experience. Faculty members in other disciplines consistently report that the speech communication course has met the changing needs of their students.

Such a response is, unfortunately, not universal in all colleges--two or four-year. One university in our state has recently lost its speech requirement--a victim of perceived irrelevance. Such consequences are tragic, particularly when speech communication is uniquely well suited and able to incorporate andragogical theory into its teaching methodology. In this presentation I have highlighted only one area of adult education research. There are many more of equal relevance to our discipline. In the face of a growing and diverse population of adult learners, I believe it is our professional obligation to embrace the world of adult education. Andragogy is a partner that can help the speech communication discipline grow, prosper, and survive.

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